

Chapter 5:

TRANSPORTATION

INTRODUCTION

A well-designed and maintained transportation system provides safe, efficient, and reliable ways for people and products to get to their residences, businesses, schools, commercial and cultural centers and places of employment. Furthermore, it provides recreation opportunities, such as trails or walkways, and it contributes to the overall image of the community. This chapter provides an inventory and analysis of the Town of Washburn's transportation system and it describes goals, objectives, policies, maps, and programs to maintain and enhance the existing and future transportation system of the Town.

INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

ROAD SYSTEM

The road system is the most important component of Washburn's transportation system. It provides the primary links within the community and to surrounding areas. The Town currently has 127.74 miles of town roads, and 5.21 miles of county highway roads, for a total of 132.95 total miles. The following provides an overview of the key components of Washburn's road system.

Functional Road Classification

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) classifies roads as principal and minor arterials, major and minor collectors, and local streets. The following provides a brief description of the classification system as it applies to the Town of Washburn. (*Refer to Figure 5-1: Existing Transportation System Map*).

Principal Arterials. Principal arterials provide connections between cities or regions. They move large volumes of traffic along reasonably direct routes. Consequently, private property access, parking, street intersections, and traffic signals are often limited to help facilitate smooth traffic flow. There are no principal arterials in Washburn. However, WisDOT identifies US Highway 2, located approximately 4 miles south of the Town, as a principal arterial road.

Minor Arterials. Minor arterials connect to principal arterial roads. Like principal arterials, minor arterials carry large volumes of traffic, but unlike principal arterials, minor arterials generally allow more access to private property and they may allow on street parking. WisDOT identifies State Highway 13 (Bayfield Street in the City of Washburn), located just east and south of the Town, as a minor arterial road.



*County Road C – Major Collector Road
(SWB, Inc.)*

Collectors. Collectors generally provide major connections within a community or region. They link local streets to arterial roads and can serve as primary access ways to private property. WisDOT identifies Bayfield County Highway C as the only major collector road in the Town of Washburn. Church Corner Road and Brinks Road (located on the western edge of the Town and which passes through Chequamegon Forest) are considered local collectors.

Local Streets. Local streets handle the least amount of traffic volume, but provide direct access to private property. They are generally the narrowest roads in the road system and are the most prevalent throughout the Town and the National Forest areas.

Road Jurisdiction and Maintenance Responsibilities

State Highway 13 (Bayfield Street) is under the jurisdiction of the State of Wisconsin. Bayfield County has jurisdiction of, and maintenance responsibilities for County Highway C through the Town. The Town of Washburn has jurisdiction of, and maintenance responsibilities for, all local streets in the town.

Officially, the roads within the Chequamegon National Forest areas are “dual jurisdiction” roads, meaning that the Forest Service and the Town share equally in responsibility and authority. There are approximately 85 miles of forest roads to maintain. In practice, the Forest Service tends to defer to the Town on many decisions, such as road restrictions for weight limits during the spring “break up” season. The Town gets “Gas Tax” money and does the grading and snowplowing of these roads, but the Forest Service collects Road Maintenance Deposits under our timber sale contracts and uses that money for culverts, purchasing gravel, producing chunk wood (a substitute for gravel, especially on sandy soils), and does some major maintenance/reconstruction through service contracts.

Traffic Counts and Congestion

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) defines the “annual average daily traffic” (AADT) as the number of vehicles that are expected to pass a given location on an average day of the year. While the traffic counts vary from year to year, the data shows a general increase in traffic counts over the past twenty years. There are several likely reasons for this increase, including increased tourism in the area, increased automobile use in general, and increased single occupancy vehicle use. If these current trends continue, and as the projected population of the Town increases, the Town can expect a slight

increase in future traffic through the community. The traffic counts for Town of Washburn are very limited; in fact, most of the key sites for traffic counts took place in and around the adjacent City of Washburn and other parts of Bayfield County. (refer to Table 5-A: Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) for Key Locations by Year shows traffic counts from 1980 through 2003 for three key locations in City of Washburn and northern Bayfield County)

The closest key site is shown at County Highway C (West 8th Avenue) and Pine Street in the City of Washburn. This site indicates over 3,100 average vehicles per day at this intersection. We must assume that since County Highway C serves as the major collector for the area and the Town, these vehicle counts indicate a large number of vehicles traveling to and from the Town. The other key point is County Highway C in the Town of Bayview, located immediately north of the Town of Washburn. At this point the AADT drops to approximately 1,000 vehicles. Approximately 17 miles to the north near the intersection of County Highway C and State Highway 13 (south of Cornucopia, WI), the traffic again drops to approximately 720 AADT. Again we can assume most of this traffic is from residents of the Town and surrounding communities commuting to their work places in City of Washburn and City of Ashland, and/or residents traveling to the main commercial, education or medical facilities of Washburn and Ashland.

TABLE 5-A: ANNUAL AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC FOR KEY LOCATIONS BY YEAR								
Location	Annual Average Daily Traffic by Year							
	1980	1983	1986	1990	1994	1997	2000	2003
County Road C (at Pine Street in City of Washburn)	1,680	1,280	1,410	1,670	740	2,000	2,000	3,100
County Highway C (Town of Bayview)	530	580	940	990	990	880	1000	N/A
State Highway 13 between W. 8th Ave. and W. 7th Ave (City of Washburn)	5,350	5,500	7,440	8,450	6,100	6,900	7,400	9,400
State Highway 13 between W. 2nd Ave. and W. 1st Ave. (City of Washburn)	5,340	4,960	7,850	6,130	7,300	8,100	6,300	5,800

Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation and Chapter 6 of the Bayfield County Land Use Plan

In 2006, WisDOT did not identify State Highway 13 (Bayfield Street) as a congested road. However, the Wisconsin State Highway Plan 2020, anticipates that State Highway 13 will have a moderate level of congestion in 2020, assuming no capacity expansion. The Bayfield County Land Use Plan –Transportation Element also does not identify County Highway C receiving any improvements in their 2012 Highway Improvement Plan.

One could view increasing traffic counts with optimism or concern. Increasing traffic counts may indicate an increase in tourists and passersby, which, in turn, may help businesses on or near Bayfield Street. On other hand, increasing traffic counts may suggest that people are not carpooling or using alternative modes of transportation to the degree that they could. In addition, without appropriate mitigation, increasing traffic counts may potentially lead to negative side effects, including increased traffic accidents and increased degradation of

road surfaces. Increased traffic level also seriously detract from the rural character valued by the Town residents.

The Town should work in close cooperation with Bayfield County and WisDOT officials, and help monitor and assess the overall future conditions of County Highway C, and bring forth or communicate to these county and state officials any concerns or issues related to this vital road system.

Commuting Patterns

The 2000 U.S. Census identified that of the 275 workers in the Town of Washburn 16 years of age or older, 221 or 80.4% drove alone to work, 24 or 8.7% carpoled, 12 or 4.4% walked, 18 or 6.5% worked at home, and nobody used public transportation. The Census also reported that the mean travel time to work was 19 minutes. This finding indicates a significant number of Town residents are commuting to work in other communities, most notably the City of Ashland and to some extent the City of Washburn. In fact, the Census found that 1,927 Bayfield County residents worked in Ashland County, whereas only 301 Ashland County residents worked in Bayfield County. (Refer to Table 5-B below, *Transportation Modes and Work Commute Figures*.)

TABLE 5-B: TRANSPORTATION MODES and WORK COMMUTE FIGURES				
	Town of Washburn	City of Washburn	Bayfield County	State of Wisconsin
TOTAL POPULATION	541	2,280	15,013	5,363,675
Workers 16 yrs. + Commuting to Work	275	966	6,542	2,690,704
Car, Truck or Van – Alone	221 (80.4%)	74%	73.8%	80.3%
Car, Truck, Van – Carpools	24 or 8.7%	10%	10.2%	9.9%
Public Transportation	0	1%	1%	2%
Walked	12 or 4.4%	10%	7.5%	3.7%
Work at Home	18 (6.5%)	4%	6.7%	3.7%
Other Means	0	1%	0.9%	0.9%
Avg. Travel Time to Work (min.)	19 min.	13.8 min.	20.9 min.	20.8 min.
Avg. Travel Time to Work - Using Public Transportation	--	48 min.	37 min.	37 min.
Avg. Travel Time to Work - Using other transportation	19 min.	13 min.	20 min.	20 min.

Source: US Census and E-Podunk

Roadway Improvement Projects

The Town of Washburn's local road systems are regularly maintained in fairly good shape and improved on an as-needed basis. Since 2001, the Town has had a formal road improvement plan for all of its roadways, which is updated every 2 years. The plan is necessary in order to comply with Wisconsin Department of Transportation's guidelines for local communities and townships such as Washburn to receive Town Road Improvement Program (TRIP) funds for its own use. The Town has received 3 TRIP funded road improvement projects approved by WisDOT, for Sky Road, the north end of Ondossagon Road and Nevers Road, which were all asphalt overlay projects. The Town intends to request further TRIP funding for other roadways throughout its future.

The Town also participates in the PASER (Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating) with WisDOT and this too is updated every 2 years. The Town Board and the Town's road superintendent go on annual road inspections every spring, and perform an internal evaluation and assessment of their own roadways. This PASER program and Town inspection program helps with the overall road improvement plan.

State and Regional Highway Plans

The *Wisconsin State Highway Plan 2020* focuses on the 11,800 miles of State Trunk Highway routes in Wisconsin. The plan identifies no traffic congestion in the next 20 years on highways within the Town of Washburn. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has not adopted state or regional highway plans that will have a significant effect on the Town of Washburn. However, WisDOT's 2006-2011 Highway Improvement Program identifies that State Highway 13 (located along the eastern edge of the Town and through City of Washburn) will be milled and resurfaced sometime between 2009 and 2011.

There has been an effort by some to designate State Highway 13 and part of US Highway 2 as a scenic byway. Such a designation could provide grant opportunities for resource protection, safety improvements, trails, and so on. The Town of Washburn and its surrounding neighbors should be active participants in discussions relating to the scenic byways program or to any state or regional highway plans that may affect the Town of Washburn and its neighbors.

RAILROAD

There are no operating railroads (for freight, passenger or commuters) in the Town of Washburn, nor any plans to expand or provide any railway service lines in the future. From an historical point of view, the railroad greatly influenced the growth and development of the City of Washburn and the surrounding communities including the Town of Washburn. In the late 1800s through the early 1900s, the railroad was one of the primary means of transporting raw materials and manufactured goods to and from Washburn. However, by the

Former Railroad Right-of-Way currently used as a Snowmobile and ATV Trail (SWB, Inc.)

mid 1900s, rail service to Washburn was no longer feasible given the demise of the industries that used the railroad and given the growth of the road system and trucking industry. The last operating railroad abandoned service to the City of Washburn in 1983. The nearest working railroad is located in the City of Ashland.

AIRPORT

Although the Town of Washburn does not have an airport, the Town and its residents have easy access to John F. Kennedy Memorial Airport in Ashland, Wisconsin. The City of Ashland and Ashland County jointly operate the airport, but because the airport is important to the region, not just Ashland, Bayfield County helps fund airport operations. The airport has two paved runways. The primary runway is 5,200 feet long by 100 feet wide, and the secondary runway is 3,400 feet long by 75 feet wide. Both runways are adequate for twin-engine aircraft. The airport has a log cabin style terminal building, 21 hangars, and a full time airport manager.

SHIPPING & HARBORS

There are no shipping centers, harbors or ports within the Town of Washburn because the Town does not extend eastward to Lake Superior. However, in nearby City of Washburn, harbor and shipping industries flourished from the late 1800s to the early 1900s. The City's port facilities included a coal dock, a merchandise dock, and a grain elevator dock, along with a number of sawmills. During this period, large quantities of lumber were harvested from the Town and nearby communities, and shipped out through the ports of Washburn. The harbor also provided the ability to ship locally cut brownstone and grains from the area, and allow for the drop-off of merchandise from the eastern states. But by the early 1900s, much of the forests in the region had been depleted, the demand for brownstone had diminished, and the grain elevators moved to Duluth, Minnesota. Consequently, harbor shipments declined dramatically. The merchandise dock and the grain elevator dock no longer exist, but the coal dock (also known as the commercial dock) still exists and is used occasionally to transport and store bulk materials, including aggregate.



Washburn Marina (SWB, Inc.)

TRAILS

The Town of Washburn and the surrounding region is fortunate to have a number of recreational trails to accommodate a variety of users. The Town currently has approximately 50 miles of snowmobile and 20 miles of all terrain vehicles (ATV) routes and trails. The following provides an overview of the key trails in the Town of Washburn.



Typical Snowmobile/ATV Route on a Town road system (SWB, Inc.)

There are four marked trail systems running through the Town, including Valhalla, Iron River, Moquah Spur and Lenawee Trails. Some of these trails are clearly marked or indicated as ATV, snowmobile or dual-purpose snowmobile & ATV trails or routes. (refer to Figure 5.1 – Map of Recreational Resources).

Valhalla Trail

The Mt. Valhalla Recreation Area, located in the Chequamegon National Forest, has snowmobile trails, ATV trails, horseback riding trails, cross-country ski trails, and hiking trails.

Insert Pic of Valhalla Trail Here

Iron River Trail

Insert Pic of Iron River Trail here (SWB, Inc.)

Moquah Spur Trail

Insert Pic of Moquah Spur Trail here (SWB, Inc.)

Lenawee Trail

Insert Pic of Lenawee Trail here (SWB, Inc.)

Other Trails and Routes in the Town

There are hiking trails around Long Lake, Horseshoe Lake and Twin Lakes, which are all located in the Chequamegon National Forest (but still in the Town of Washburn limits). A fairly large horseback trail originates at the Horse Lake campgrounds and encircles a large outer area of Horse Lake. Horseback riding is also allowed on all national forest roadways. Bayfield County also lists a 1.5 mile Long Lake Interpretive Trail and a one-mile long Birch Grove Interpretative Trail.

Surrounding Trails

There are many trails in the surrounding area. The Washburn School Forest and Environmental Education Center at the north end of 8th Avenue West in the City of Washburn, has hiking, snowshoeing, and cross-country ski trails. The Tri-County Corridor Trail is a multi-use trail that runs from Superior, Wisconsin to Ashland, Wisconsin. The trail is roughly 12 miles south of Washburn and can be accessed via existing snowmobile trails from the Town of Washburn and the Chequamegon National Forest trails.



Snowmobile Trail west of Thompson's West End Park showing connections to Surrounding Trails (SWB, Inc.)

Bicycle and Pedestrian Routes

Bicycling is also popular in the Town of Washburn and the surrounding area. In the Town of Washburn, the primary route generally follows County Highway C. Bayfield County Land Use Plan has designated this bicycle route through the Town as a "Best" to "Moderate Condition" bike route. Approximately 26 miles of paved roads intersect throughout the Town, which provide suitable and safer surfaces for bicyclists. The other roadways throughout the Town are primarily narrow, unimproved (graveled) surfaces, with very little, if any shoulders. Plus, the differing grades limit sight distances for both bicyclists and vehicle drivers, making some of these local roadways a bit treacherous for riding and less desirable as bicycle routes. The Superior Vistas Bike Tour is an annual bike tour event that starts at

Thompson's West End Park in the City of Washburn, goes through the surrounding region, and returns to Washburn. All other trails open to bicycles are predominantly unimproved and would require a much more rugged framed and wheeled bicycle, such as a typical mountain bike.

The Town of Washburn, like most rural towns has limited pedestrian walkways or features. Most pedestrians are forced to use the roadways or shoulders of these road systems. Most rural communities do not have (or require for that matter) sidewalks or crosswalks typically found or seen in urbanized areas. Most of the pedestrian traffic is probably limited and used primarily to walk to other residences, for exercise or pleasure. The distance from the employment, commercial, education and other services typically found in the urbanized areas (i.e. City of Washburn and City of Ashland) make the concept of "walking to work" or these other destinations difficult, if not impossible. The projected increase and aging of the Town's population may inevitably lead to further reliance on the personal vehicle, unless the Town and the surrounding communities work together or partner on more effective means or alternatives to reducing this singular mode of transportation, and explore other economical and environmentally friendly forms of transportation.

Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020

The *Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020* (1998) presents a blueprint for improving and expanding bicycle transportation routes in the state. There are no plans to expand state bicycle routes into the Town of Washburn. The WisDOT, along with the Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin, has compiled a Wisconsin State Bike Map that highlights the most favorable bicycling conditions in northern Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020

This plan provides a statewide framework to increase walking and to promote pedestrian safety. The plan establishes goals, objectives, and actions regarding the provision of pedestrian accommodations that could be implemented. The plan also serves to help communities identify actions they can take to establish pedestrian travel as a viable, convenient, and safe transportation choice throughout Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Rustic Road Program (taken from WisDOT)

The [Rustic Roads Program](#) was created in 1973 by the State Legislature to preserve what remains of Wisconsin's scenic, lightly traveled back roads for the enjoyment of motorists, hikers and bicyclists.

Local governments and communities benefit by Rustic Road designation by providing travelers an additional incentive to visit. Unique brown and yellow signs mark the routes of all officially-designated Rustic Roads. These routes provide bikers, hikers, and motorists an opportunity to leisurely travel through some of Wisconsin's scenic countryside. The Town of Washburn may want to investigate and explore the possibility of designating one or more of their rural town roads as a rustic road system in the future.



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Trails can provide a sense of place and a source of community pride. When integrated with features such as historic sites, residential and commercial areas, and parks and lakes, they can improve the overall character of a region. They are beautiful places for people to enjoy the natural beauty of our state. Wisconsin DNR enthusiastically claims “*Trail corridors can become outdoor classrooms where children and adults can observe and learn about their natural and cultural environment.*” At this time, there are no plans to construct additional trail in the town. As the Town continues to grow, its population ages yet remains fairly active, and to help attract younger residents, the Town should seriously consider or plan for more trails to serve the needs of the residents and attract more visitors to the area.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

The Bay Area Rural Transit (BART) system provides bus service to the surrounding community and area, but not the Town of Washburn. The nearest BART bus stop is located at the intersection of 5th Avenue West and Bayfield Street in nearby City of Washburn. All BART buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts and bike racks. The Town would like to explore and encourages the possibility of BART providing a bus stop somewhere within the Town of Washburn. More than likely, this stop would need to be near a centralized location with the existing and planned residences, preferably the Town Hall off County Highway C.



BART Bus Stop at Washburn Civic Center (SWB, Inc.)

The Blue Goose, a subsidiary of BART with financial support from the City of Washburn and Bayfield County Human Services, offers rides to anyone needing transportation within Washburn. The Blue Goose can be used to get to BART bus stops, stores, and other areas in the community. The Town may want to explore the possibility of expanding this Blue Goose transportation service into the Town, and provide financial support if feasible or if demand is warranted or met by the Town residents. The Bay Area Transport, LLC and Bay Area Taxi, LLC (private taxi services based in Ashland) also offer limited transportation services to Town of Washburn residents and the surrounding area.

PUBLIC INPUT

The following summarizes key transportation items from the community survey conducted as part of this planning process. Refer to Appendix A for detailed survey results.

- 61% of respondents rated the overall condition of streets and highways in the Town of Washburn as good or very good, 29% rated them as average, and only 6% rated them as poor. Road shoulders were rated at 52% believing they were adequate, while 42% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.
- 42% of respondents indicated that adequate opportunities exist for safe bicycling within the Town, while 50% disagree or strongly disagree that safe bicycling exists.

- 50% of the survey respondents reported the proportion of blacktopped (paved) roadways is just right, while 28% indicated not enough and 5% indicated too much.
- 54% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that all Town roads should be available to ATV's, while 40% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this sentiment.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following goal is a broad statement that reflects the Town's vision for addressing the transportation needs of the community. It represents the end that the Town is striving to attain. The following objectives are specific, measurable, intermediate ends that are achievable and mark progress towards the goal. The following policies are key actions intended to accomplish the stated objectives.

Ch. 5 – Goal 1: Washburn has an integrated, multi-modal transportation system that provides healthy, safe, efficient, environmentally sensitive, and economical movement of people and goods.

Objective 5.1: Provide a functional, safe, accessible, and economical transportation system that meets the transportation needs of the Town's residents and visitors.

Policy 5.1.a: Encourage Town residents to utilize carpooling and integrate park and ride opportunities and walking trails into land use planning efforts, where appropriate.

Policy 5.1.b: Work with public, semi-public, and private transportation providers to ensure effective transportation services to its residents.

Policy 5.1.c: Investigate the need and encourage the marketing, development and installation of a Bay Area Rural Transit bus stop or Blue Goose service line to the Town, preferably near or at the Town Hall site.

Policy 5.1.d: Provide a functional and safe trail system in the Town and to surrounding destinations, that provides a safe, cost-effective alternative to the road system.

Policy 5.1.e: Encourage/Require new residential developments approved under building permits and/or subdivisions, to dedicate to the public good and welfare trail easements where future or existing trails are planned.

Policy 5.1.f: Ensure that the Town of Washburn's multi-modal transportation system is effectively signed and safe by separating incompatible modes of transportation. For example, separate motorized trails from pedestrian trails. Also, ensure safe crossings and signage where roads and trails intersect.

Policy 5.1.g: Ensure that Washburn's multi modal-transportation system is consistent with the provisions of the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Policy 5.1.h: Continue to participate and work with WisDOT officials on the Town's PASER (*Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating*) The results should be reported to the WisDOT or Bayfield County officials periodically to ensure that all town highways and road systems are kept healthy and their lifespan improved.

Objective 5.2: Provide an attractive transportation system that offers recreation and economic benefits.

Policy 5.2.a: Consider and maintain the unique rural character of the residential areas and preserving the environmental conditions of an area when planning, constructing, and maintaining future transportation routes and facilities.

Policy 5.2.b: Provide and plan for pedestrian links between the residential dwellings throughout the Town and the Town Hall and to other pedestrian corridors or walking trails.

Policy 5.2.c: Address issues and adopt policies (or specific ordinances) related to snowmobiling and ATV use on trails and along the Town roads.

Policy 5.2.d: Expand the Town of Washburn's trail system and work with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions to connect the Town's trails and bicycle routes to surrounding communities and destinations. Support and promote the regional trail system as a tourist attraction.

Objective 5.3: Promote sustainable and healthy modes of transportation.

Policy 5.3.a: Work towards converting conventional fossil fuel burning Town vehicles to cleaner, healthier, and more efficient vehicles that reduce the City's reliance on fossil fuels and that have minimal adverse affect on the natural environment. Make Town government an outstanding example of how to convert to sustainable and healthy modes of transportation.

Policy 5.3.b: Promote efforts to reduce the use of single-occupancy, fossil fuel burning vehicles by promoting public transportation, carpooling, and non-motorized modes of transportation.

Policy 5.3.c: Promote land use planning that reduces reliance on motorized modes of transportation and that encourages healthy modes of transportation, including walking and bicycling.

Policy 5.3.d: Cooperate with Bay Area Rural Transit (BART) to provide local, regional, and national healthy, sustainable, transportation options.